



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Liverpool

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

**Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

## A message from our chair

**It continues to be my privilege to support and chair Healthwatch Liverpool, at a time when the health and social care system in the city and beyond face growing challenges and expanding health inequalities.**

Sarah and the team have worked tirelessly in service of the diverse and wide-ranging communities of Liverpool, to help amplify the voices of all our communities in shaping the services available to them.

Local provider organisations deliver services to our population and we will continue to listen to what our neighbourhoods are saying. We will support those organisations in understanding how to meet their needs, as well as shining a light on where improvements can be made. From care homes, to GP services; community care to hospital treatment; mental to physical health, we want to enable fair and patient-centred care for all.

Healthwatch Liverpool is dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, and empower those hidden voices. This work is epitomised in our work in enabling providers to be more trauma-informed in their work. This is also an example of the incredible contribution that our colleague Claire has made to our team over many years, making an impact on the wider community and leaving a legacy of love, compassion and understanding.

I want to thank our volunteers, staff, community partners and board members for their continued commitment to the values we uphold. We also couldn't do what we do without those members of the public who have shared their experiences with us – we thank you for the trust you place in us.

Please continue in sharing your stories, as with your help we will continue working to ensure that our health and care services work for everyone, now and in the future.



"Healthwatch Liverpool is dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, and empower those hidden voices."

**Zoran Blackie, Healthwatch Liverpool Chair**

## About us

# Healthwatch Liverpool is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

We want a health and social care system that is fair and works for everyone. We want to make a difference by influencing positive change



### Our values:

**Empowering** – We empower local people to have their voices heard on issues relating to health and social care;

**Equity** – We value equality, diversity and inclusion and work to make sure that all communities in Liverpool are represented in our work;

**Person-centred** – We work with everyone in an empathetic, confidential and non-judgemental way;

**Collaboration** – Our work is evidence-based and collaborative. We work closely with other organisations which share our values;

**Independence** – We are independent and not afraid to challenge decisions when they are not in the interests of local people;

**Accountability** – We are transparent and open in everything we do and we are accountable to the community

# Our year in numbers

We supported **93,560** people to have their say and get information about their care. In 2024–25 we employed **12.3 (FTE)** staff and, our work was supported by **14** volunteers.

## Reaching out:



**1891** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**91,669** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **accessing NHS dentistry and emergency dental care** and **navigating adult social care**.

## Championing your voice:



We published **22** reports about experiences of health and care including **The Impact of Sexual Trauma on Health Appointments, Enter and View visits to care settings** and **Listening Events at various Hospital Trusts and other local NHS services**.

Our most popular information resource was our **FAQ on 'Finding an NHS Dentist'**, which details the current NHS dental crisis and guides people on their options.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Liverpool City Council** for our Healthwatch activity. In 2024/25, we received **£429,838.77**, which is **0.33%** more than last year.



# A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in **Liverpool**. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

We held a Listening Event at Broadgreen Hospital's Reablement Assessment Hub, and made 10 recommendations based on observations and patient opinions.



We attended a 'Head Matters' event at The Brain Charity, where we engaged with 37 people at our stall, hearing their views and offering signposting information



## Summer

We welcomed 'Freshers' at University of Liverpool, and Liverpool John Moores University Welcome Events, providing information on GP registration, vaccinations, mental health, and more, to 400 students.



We agreed a GDPR compliant Data Sharing Agreement with our neighbouring local Healthwatch, to enable further collaboration and shared learning



## Autumn

We launched the Cheshire and Mersey GP Survey, which would go on to hear from 514 people in Liverpool, about their views and experiences of primary care.



We attended a 'Winter Survival' event, where we engaged with 60 people, hearing their views on health and social care services, and providing signposting information



## Winter

We launched our Sexual Trauma project at Liverpool Women's Hospital and were Highly Commended at the Healthwatch National Impact Awards for this work.



We launched our volunteer 'Readers Panel' - a pool of members of the public who review public facing Trust documents such as leaflets, for their clarity and accessibility leading to clearer information for the public



# Working together for change

**We've worked with local Healthwatch in neighbouring areas to ensure people's experiences of care in Liverpool are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

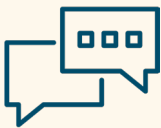


Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) is the 3rd largest ICB area in England. During the past year, the 9 C&M local Healthwatch have continued to work together to provide a strong voice for the 2.5 million people who live, work and use health and care services in our region.

We have co-produced a Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreement enabling us to collaborate on a wide range of issues. This means the ICB hears what matters to local people and on a much wider footprint to provide equitable services.

Healthwatch leads meet weekly to keep up to date with all things health and care related, and to brief each other on the ICS meetings we have attended. We also use this time together to exchange information with invited colleagues from the ICB, CQC and other partners.

## The big conversation:



The C&M ICB recognised the value of a collaborative approach to gathering feedback in relation to Primary Care Access Recovery (PCARP) and asked us to engage with the 2.5m people across the area. All 9 local Healthwatch took part in designing and distributing the survey – with Healthwatch Cheshire taking the lead on analysing and drafting individual and combined reports which are due to be published in June. The impact of these reports will influence the ICB's work on GP access.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We continue to build relationships within the wider ICB structure and attend the Board and various sub-groups, as well as maintaining already established relationships and seats at Place. We share, and rotate, attendances at C&M ICB meetings. In November 2024 we met with the Chair of the ICB Quality & Performance Committee, commencing a discussion about how the patient feedback we collect can be better incorporated into the discussions of the Committee.

# Making a difference in the community

**We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.**

## Hearing Views of St Paul's Eye Hospital



We held a listening event at St Paul's Eye Hospital, at the Royal Liverpool Hospital site, hearing from 31 patients and family members. Overall experiences were positive, with 81% rating the service as good or very good and 77% feeling well-informed about their care. Staff were praised for their time and attitude, but issues were raised around parking, waiting times, signage, facilities, and support for additional needs. Based on this, we made recommendations including signage improvements and clearer information which the Trust have now developed a plan to address. We made an accessible video about the visit and the importance of people sharing their views.

## Sharing Perspectives – Neurodivergent and Learning Disability Lived Experience Visit at Aintree University Hospital



We piloted a 'Lived Experience Visit' project, providing health care services with feedback about their patient facilities from the perspective of members of our Learning Disability and Neurodivergent subgroups. Our first visit was to Aintree University Hospital. Prior to the visit we had planning discussions with our lived experience volunteers and thought about the themes we wished to pay particular attention to on the day. Our walkthrough visit was supported by Trust staff and our group made observations around things such as sensory input, cleanliness, signage, accessibility, and information. The upcoming accessible report will be shared with the Trust, with the opportunity to comment on changes implemented. We look forward to expanding these visits to other healthcare settings in the coming year.

## Improving care over time



In October 2024, we visited Liverpool University Dental Hospital to better understand how this unit supports patients with additional needs, such as those with learning disabilities, neurodiversity, or complex medical conditions. We spoke with staff and family members, observed good practices that made the unit feel less daunting than the main hospital, and made recommendations including using more Easy Read materials, an accessible information board, and online resources to help patients prepare for their visit.



# Listening to your experiences

**Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.**

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



# Listening to your experiences

## The impact of Sexual Trauma on attendance for health appointments

### We're piloting our Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Plan

In July 2024 we published our report on the impact of Sexual Trauma on attendance for health appointments, following engagement in 2023/24 where we spoke to 66 people about their experiences and views.

Our report included a series of recommendations that would help make appointments less traumatic for survivors and help health staff to provide sensitive, trauma-informed care. This included the roll out of #CheckWithMeFirst cards to make it easier for patients to discreetly let health practitioners know that certain procedures may be difficult or re-traumatising for them. We secured funding to produce and distribute these cards.

### What difference did this make?

After sharing the report with partners and health providers we were delighted that Liverpool Women's Hospital chose to work with us to implement the learning with their staff and patients, beginning with a pilot in Gynaecology Outpatients. Staff will receive training from the Survivors Trust and patients will be provided with our trauma cards so they can discreetly request additional support or understanding.

We jointly launched the implementation project at an event in March 2025, to an enthusiastic audience of staff from the trust and beyond. We are pleased that the Brownlow Primary Care Network and the Special Care Unit at the Liverpool Dental Hospital are now also joining the pilot.



"For medical professionals, my appointment might just be a normal day at the office. But for me, it's anything but normal. It's triggering, de-railing, and traumatic. The difference it will make to feel like that is consistently recognised, respected, and understood, in practice and in policy, is going to be massive." - **Jen, Survivor**

# Listening to your experiences

We shared the learning from the project with other Healthwatch in the 2024-25 National Awards Showcase, receiving a Highly Commended award.

The real satisfaction for us though comes in knowing the difference this work has made in bringing this important issue into the spotlight and helping transform the experiences of this group of patients.



**“We are incredibly grateful to Healthwatch Liverpool for listening and responding to the barriers which exist for women who have experienced sexual trauma, in attending health screenings and appointments.**

**Violence and sexual offences remain the top reported crime in Liverpool and for women and girls the impact can be devastating and long lasting but the effects of trauma on physical health are under researched and often misunderstood.**

**The impact of Sexual Trauma on attendance for health appointments (2024), is a really important body of work, which has been coproduced with services and survivors, to enable them to collectively share their lived experience.**

**This not only raises awareness but shines a light on the unintentional harm that can be caused, when services do not fully understand trauma responses. The report also highlights, the health inequity for women who have experienced sexual violence and trauma, in achieving optimal health.”**

**- Karen Downing, Centre Manager, Women’s Health Information and Support Centre (WHISC)**



The four different designs of our #CheckWithMeFirst cards which are available to support trauma survivors when attending a health appointment

# Listening to your experiences

## GP Access in Liverpool

The Cheshire and Mersey ICB were required to submit a GP Access Recovery Plan to NHS England, and they asked the 9 local Healthwatch to talk to patients about whether they felt GP access had improved as a result of the work. We carried out a GP Access Survey from October 2024 to March 2025, gathering feedback from 514 residents. The survey was designed to gather diverse feedback and was available in both online and paper formats, and we also took this engagement directly to the public, aiming to capture voices across communities, including community and digital outreach. The survey aligned with the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan (PCARP) priorities, exploring patient contact methods, appointment availability, support for vulnerable groups, and technology use.

### Key things we heard:

Many people said they find it difficult to contact their GP, with an average 'Ease of Access' rating of 5.3 out of 10.

Theme	What we heard
<b>Access and Booking</b>	<b>Appointment booking systems including 8am phone lines are inaccessible for many, creating delays and unequal access.</b>
<b>Staff experience</b>	<b>Patients expressed frustration with staff when trying to access appointments, but often shared positive feedback about clinicians, if they did get seen.</b>
<b>Alternative services</b>	<b>Many people had mixed results and experiences of using pharmacies and NHS 111; and many ended up back at their GP.</b>
<b>Digital Access</b>	<b>Online systems help some but exclude others, widening the digital divide.</b>

### What difference did this make?

"Healthwatch have undertaken a vital survey with our population on how they perceive access in our GP practices. This is a temperature check on whether the investment and new ways of working are meeting the needs of the residents. The ICB is using the information to inform future plans to make care more responsive and accessible for those who need it.

Thanks, as ever, to the Healthwatch team who support and offer constructive challenge to our work, and ensure we listen to the patient voice at all times."

**Clare Watson, Assistant Chief Executive, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside**



# Listening to your experiences

## Views of Mental Health Day Opportunities Services – A Service User and Staff Engagement

We were approached by Liverpool City Council to gather independent feedback from service users, staff, and managers across five mental health day service providers. This engagement and its findings supported a local authority review aimed at informing the future design of these vital services, making the best use of existing resources, and reviewing referral routes and facilities. Using surveys (paper, online, and phone), we collected detailed feedback from users across all five services, and from staff and managers at 4 out of the 5 services.

### Key things we heard:



94%

of service users said that the service had been 'Very Helpful' or 'Helpful' in maintaining their sense of mental health and wellbeing.

98%

of service users said that they were 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the staff at the service.

0%

of staff and managers who responded, were 'Completely Satisfied' that their service was sufficiently resourced

86%

of staff and managers said they were completely or mostly confident that staff had the right skills and training for their jobs

### What difference did this make?

This report has highlighted the importance of these services to the people who need them. The findings will inform the future commissioning of these services. We also made several key recommendations for improvement of the services, which would have positive impacts on service users and staff. Our recommendations include maintaining or increasing funding, improving referral pathways (e.g., a "No Wrong Door" model), enhancing coordination between providers, and recognising the unique contributions of culturally specific services like Mary Seacole House and alternative models like Waythrough's Time Bank. Continued investment in staff training, shared facilities, and cross-sector collaboration was also advised to ensure the sustainability and accessibility of this vital mental health support.



"Many thanks Sarah, Claire, and everyone else at Healthwatch who helped produce the report, it's excellent! Really reflective of what we do here at PSS and the challenges we face. I will ensure that this is shared with everyone who contributed to it, staff and the people we support." – **Nicky McGovern, PSS Wellbeing Centres Service Manager**

# Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Liverpool. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.**

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

**This year, we have reached different communities by:**

- Engaging with people about their experiences and views, including people with advanced care needs and their families, and Trans and Non-Binary people
- Facilitating subgroups for people who are neurodivergent and/or have a learning disability, to share their views and what matters to them
- Bringing together partners representing diverse communities at our Community Engagement Board, to guide us on what matters to Liverpool people





# Hearing from all communities

## We Care About Care Home Voices – Resident Engagement and Enter and Views

**During the last year we visited 24 care homes across Liverpool to 'Enter and View' and find out more about how our care services are running and how the residents and families are feeling about their care home.**

Living with advanced care needs requiring residential care is a complex experience. We know that during such a challenging chapter of life common routes to sharing views, such as the ability to attend an event, are not always possible. Care home residents and their families may therefore face barriers to having their voices heard. This is why, across all 24 Enter and View visits this year, we have strived to engage with residents and their loved ones within care homes – bringing our interest in their thoughts and feelings, and our mission to ensure they are heard, to them.

We don't limit our interest to only the care homes people live in, but all their health and care experiences, including not being able to get an NHS dentist, hospital admissions and discharges, and care from Multi-Disciplinary Teams.

Each visit results in an Enter and View report which includes improvement recommendations based on our observations as well as the thoughts and opinions of residents, their families, and those who provide the care. Through our Enter and View visits this year, we made 45 recommendations to care homes.

### Outcome achieved for care home residents and staff

Our Enter and View visit to one home helped to improve joined-up patient centred care for patients, and communication between professionals: We learned that the home had no MDT. We discussed this with partners in the Liverpool Quality Assurance group to discuss if there was anything that could be done. The home now has a regular fortnightly MDT with the GP and their Matron. They described this new addition as working great and now the matron that had already been supporting them well before now, has additional matron team members.



**“Care homes are hugely important to the lives of people who use them and their families. They enable people to live in a safe environment and receive the appropriate care to meet their assessed needs. It is fundamentally important to Liverpool City Council to understand the experiences of people who use care homes, especially those that we commission to care for people. The work that Healthwatch do is invaluable to us to provide that independent feedback and their staff are skilled at engaging with people, helping them to share their views and signpost them to any additional support they may need.”**

**– Catherine Challinor, Head of Service Quality Assurance & In House Provider Services – Adult Care and Health, Liverpool City Council**

# Hearing from all communities

## Trans+ Experiences of Health

### Clinical chemistry clarity for Trans people

**We have continued our work on Trans, non-binary, and gender diverse experiences of healthcare this year. At a time when the rights and dignity of Trans people are increasingly under public and political scrutiny, ensuring that their voices are heard is more vital than ever.**

In 2022–23 we carried out a project around Trans health. This has led to follow up work, with services contacting us for advice or support. Senior staff from our local blood transfusion and clinical chemistry services approached us with concerns about risks to Trans patients if blood results were misinterpreted due to sex and gender assumptions. Their aim was to develop ethical guidelines which respect the privacy, dignity and personal data of patients whilst also minimising potential risks.

We established a reference group of Trans patients and healthcare professionals to co-produce work towards this aim. This has led to draft patient information leaflets to improve awareness and clarity on this topic.

### Trans people's experiences of GP services

**When Healthwatch England launched their national project exploring the experiences of trans and non-binary patients in primary care, we saw an opportunity to contribute insights from our Trans+ community in Liverpool.**

25 local people shared their personal stories as part of this important national research. The Healthwatch England report, drawing on feedback from 1,393 trans and non-binary people, highlights that Trans+ patients often face different challenges compared to cisgender patients—especially at the GP front door. Barriers are also often experienced around administrative processes, such as updating names, pronouns, or gender markers. Many also reported difficulties accessing gender-affirming care, often due to inconsistent interpretations of clinical guidance.

The research findings and recommendations will shed light on the obstacles faced by Trans+ people when accessing GP care. This work aims to ensure decision making is led by patient voice, leading to patients receiving the respectful, inclusive, and affirming care they deserve.

# Hearing from all communities

## Hearing The Voices of People Who Are Neurodivergent and/or have a Learning Disability

**We hold regular subgroup meetings (meetings for people with lived experience of Neurodiversity and/or Learning Disability) to share their views and influence change.**

There are various ways that people can participate in these subgroups. We also support members in attending the corresponding Strategic Partnership Meetings, where professionals and lived experience attendees come together. We also facilitate unheard voices (people who find these meetings inaccessible and/or too formal) through corresponding in ways that suit individuals, such as via WhatsApp voice notes, emails, texts, or phone calls.

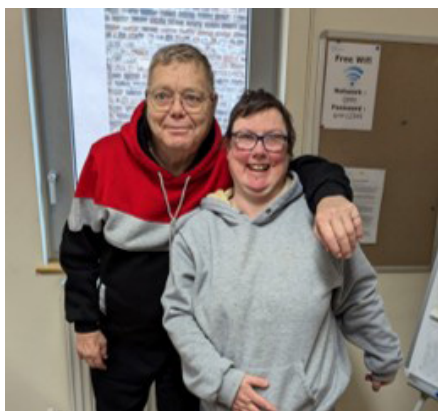
### The Neurodiversity Subgroup

Helped to create the Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategy, ensuring lived experience voices are at the heart of the strategy. The strategy will be going to the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2025.

### The Learning Disability Subgroup

Feeds into the Learning Disability Partnership Board, which is drafting an action plan to improve the lives of people with a learning disability. The subgroup elected a partnership co-chair and vice co-chair from within their membership.

Key topics from the subgroups have included: the need for reasonable adjustments by mainstream services (as well as how adjustments, such as clearer communication, would also benefit all people), and neurodivergent views on referral pathways and assessments. Towards the end of this year, we also launched our survey to hear from more people about ADHD assessments.



LD Subgroup chair Lisa, and deputy co-chair Patrick

## Improving accuracy of hospital information

During a Listening Event at Broadgreen Hospital, we observed a 'Learning Disability and Autism Board' in the hall of a ward, which was considerably out of date (2018), and used the outdated term "Aspergers" which is no longer used as a diagnostic term for autism and is considered controversial. We verbally alerted ward staff to this issue, and as a result, all outdated information was immediately taken down, and staff guaranteed further steps will be taken to ensure this information is kept up to date and accurate. This will lead to clearer and more accessible information for patients who have a learning disability and/or are neurodivergent.



# Information and signposting

**Whether it's registering with a GP, accessing emergency dental care, or finding mental health support – you can count on us. This year **91,669** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.**

**This year, we've helped people by:**

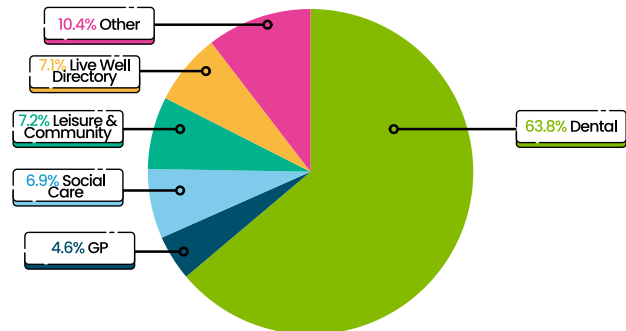
- Providing up-to-date information people can trust, and signposting to local services
- Supporting and maintaining the Live Well Directory
- Attending events to bring information to our communities, including information stalls at Student Fresher Welcome events
- Identifying gaps in service provision locally, where signposting needs could not be fully met, and raising these with decision makers



# Information and signposting

**Our Information, Advice and Signposting service helps people find their way through the maze of health and care services.**

In 2024-25, we received 3340 enquiries for Information, Advice and Signposting. As in previous years, the majority of enquiries related to accessing dentistry. This year we provided 10,705 signposts to our professional and public enquirers.



## Navigating Social Care

A client had returned to England from abroad due to their loved one having a fall related injury, and their loved one feeling "threatened" with being forced to go into a care home against their wishes. A very upsetting and stressful time for our client and their loved one, they wanted to know their rights about this, and also, how this works financially, including whether the loved one would be forced to sell their home. We provided the client with clear advice, information and signposting, to help them navigate the maze of social care and know what to expect, including information around costs and rights, as well as how to get a copy of their loved one's needs assessment care plan. The client later shared:

**"I've been reading all about the funding options. Social services are coming on Friday so I feel a bit more prepared now. Thank you so much for doing this for me."**

## Knowing Where To Turn For Mental Health Support

A client looking to contact Clock View Hospital, came through to us mistakenly via the Live Well Directory. They were struggling with their mental health and felt they didn't know where to turn. We provided the contact details they were seeking, but further, we were able to chat with the client via email, ensuring their current safety, and providing further information including how and where to access crisis support, counselling, and more. Even an unintended contact with Healthwatch Liverpool can result in advice and information that makes a difference. The client later shared:

**"I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your support. You have gone out your way, above and beyond to help me in the right direction. So thank you once again for your compassion and empathy, it means a lot."**

## Highlighting frustrations with NHS dentistry

**We continue to hear from the public about the ongoing NHS dentistry crisis.**

64% of all enquiries to our Information and Advice service this year, were from people trying to access dental care. In this year, we received 2,130 dental-related enquiries. For three-quarters of these enquiries we recorded a provision 'gap'—this means that because of a shortage of dentists taking new NHS patients, there were limited or no NHS dental services for those people.

### The Current Picture:

Only 36.2% of Liverpool adults have seen an NHS dentist in the past 2 years (a small improvement from 33.1% in 2022). While access for children has seen some progress locally, progress for adults has not materialised, with issues including not seeing NHS patients, or only seeing children under self-defined age cutoffs, waiting lists often sitting in the thousands, and some practices that previously offered NHS care now only providing private appointments, further widening the gap between those who can afford care and those who cannot.

### What we've heard:

People regularly tell us the impact this has on them, including feeling that private care is the only option but being unable to afford this, and how lack of access has affected their physical and mental health. During our Enter and View visits to care homes, home managers also often share their dentistry perspectives. They tell us that while some have built relationships with practices which has led to better outcomes, few dentists offer on-site visits, limiting early detection and care for residents.

**"We are made up when a resident coming to us from hospital is already registered with a dentist. Otherwise it's a nightmare." – Care Home Manager**

**"As a person of low income, I cannot afford private dental care, and I'm at a loss on where to turn to. This is causing me a great deal of stress and anxiety. I find it sickening that each and every dentist I contacted were quick to offer private health care as an option but refused to accept new NHS patients." – Healthwatch Liverpool Enquirer**

**"In 2023 I pulled my tooth out, for the 2nd time. Once again, I was suffering toothache and could not get an NHS dentist. Nothing was helping to ease my pain, so I decided to do another DIY job. First, I used a spanner, but it was a little bit big to grab hold of my tooth, so I decided to try with a cord. It hurt really bad but the relief I felt was amazing!! I had felt so desperate with the pain. Would I do it again? If I couldn't find a dentist then yes I think I would." – Healthwatch Liverpool Enquirer who had not been able to see a dentist in 5 years**



# Information and signposting

## What We've Done:

We represent the Cheshire and Mersey Healthwatch on the Dental Recovery Board, contributing to the creation and implementation of the ICB's Dental Recovery Plan, making sure that the ICB are aware of how the dental crisis continues to affect patients. We also escalate the most urgent cases—where people are at immediate risk—to the dental commissioners to secure care for them. This has included cases where dental issues could otherwise have led to hospitalisation (e.g/ because of extreme weight loss or unmanaged diabetes) or to worsening mental health issues or trauma. For some people having access to dentistry is a vital element in living a safe and thriving life.

**"Having Bulimia has caused me to have dental problems including losing several front and back teeth. I did not like to smile or show my mouth to anyone, including members of my family. I was embarrassed, ashamed and felt like I was wearing the trauma of the last 30 years for everyone to see on a daily basis. I received treatment and have been fitted with dentures which has made me feel like I can begin to try and live and smile again." Member of the public supported by HWL and the ICB dental team, to access the dental help they needed**

In 2022, we published a report on the NHS dentistry crisis in Liverpool. Now, 2–3 years on, with the situation still critical, we are preparing our updated report to reflect the current picture of dental care in Liverpool. Our report calls for major reform of the NHS dental system, and a reinstated commitment to NHS dentistry, with a focus on access, equity and improved workforce retention. We're urging the ICB not to withhold dental funds to cover overspends elsewhere, and to protect NHS dentistry as a vital part of preventative and essential healthcare, including its role in cancer detection pathways.

## What difference will this make?

In the short term, by escalating the most desperate cases, we achieve tangible and vital outcomes for the people most at need, not just improving their dental health but changing their lives for the better in many different ways, providing hope where people have told us they felt hopeless.

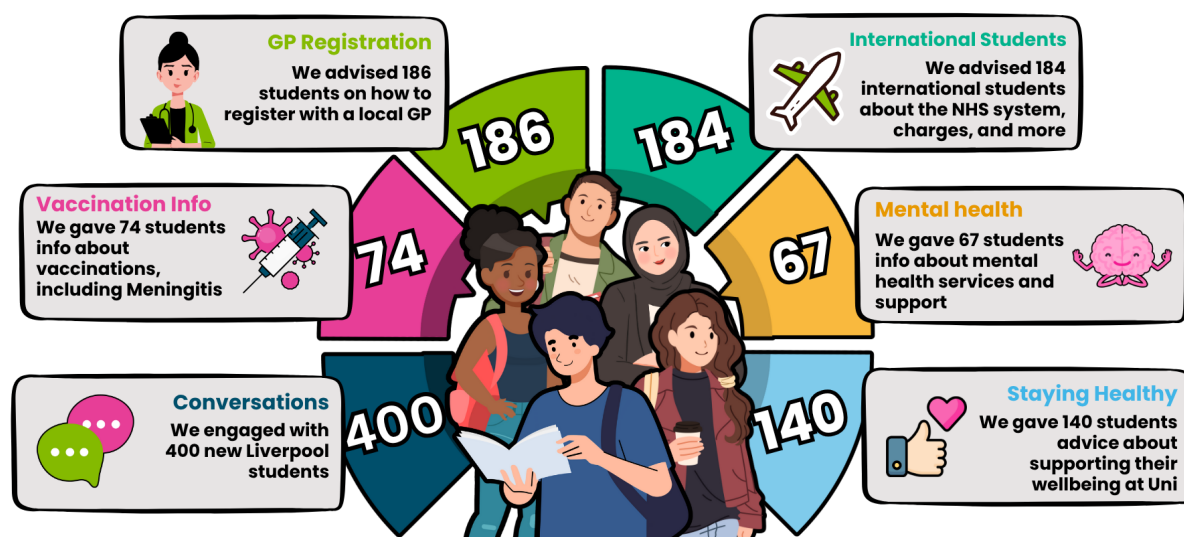
Longer term, the impact of the reforms we are calling for, could help turn around the dental crisis giving access to NHS dentistry to people who have gone without for so long.

By putting patient voice at the heart of dental conversations, we're making sure change is directed by the lived experiences of those who require these services. We cannot settle for having people resorting to pulling out their own teeth in pain and despair. Improved access to dentistry not only improves the oral health of residents, but supports early intervention and detection of serious issues including cancers, gives Liverpool's children a better start in life, and improves the mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

## Welcome to Liverpool! Info For New Students

### 2024–25 Advice and Information for New Students

**healthwatch**  
Liverpool



An infographic showing the information and signposting we have provided to Liverpool students at university welcome freshers events



## The Live Well Directory

The Live Well Directory is a live and up-to-date source of service information for members of the public and professionals in Liverpool. We manage and maintain the Liverpool based information, ensuring accessible and obtainable information on services from health to leisure, and support groups to food banks, providing vital information at people's finger-tips. In fact, the Liverpool aspect of the Live Well Directory is home to information about more than 1550 services in Liverpool. In 2024-5, there were 83,064 visits to more than 360,000 pages on the directory.

**"Thanks for all your help on this. We really do appreciate your support. The Live well directory is an amazing tool for referring/signposting our clients". - Professional Enquirer, Wellbeing Worker**

We have also added a new care home bed availability page to the directory, which provides the public with accurate and up to date information on local care homes and their vacancies, as well as information on applicable top up fees. The local authority already collates this information, but wanted to ensure it was readily available to the public, so people aren't having to search endlessly, especially during such a difficult chapter of life. The information is updated regularly.

# Showcasing volunteer impact

**Our fantastic volunteers have given 149 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.**

## **This year, our volunteers:**

- Collected experiences and provided information at community events and hospital trust visits
- Carried out administrative support including 'Easy Read' reviews, leaflet design, and meeting minute taking
- Assisted with enter and view visits to care homes, to help them improve
- Joined our Readers Panel, giving feedback to improve NHS communications





# Showcasing volunteer impact

## At the heart of what we do

**From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.**

"Volunteering with Healthwatch has been an enriching experience. It has allowed me to listen to people's experiences and contribute to improving health and social care services. I enjoy the joint partnership meetings we have, as this has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent conditions.

Being part of such a supportive and inclusive team has boosted my confidence and strengthened my passion for advocating for positive change. I'm proud to be part of this great purpose."

**Zuwaira**



## Healthwatch Liverpool Readers Panel

**We often hear from patients that the letters and leaflets they receive from the NHS are confusing, off putting or inaccessible. We decided it was time to help trusts change this.**

We set up a Readers Panel – a volunteer pool of members of the public who can comment on and suggest improvements to NHS communications. Our readers panel means NHS services get external eyes on their leaflets and letters, and our panel members get to make a difference while gaining experience and volunteering flexibility from home. Further, the outcomes and impact of this work will mean patients, family members, and the public, can access clearer and more accessible information.

In the panel's first 3 months, they have reviewed 20 documents such as leaflets, letters and booklets, for 4 NHS trusts and the ICB. These documents included topics of Huntingtons Disease testing, Martha's Law, blood transfusions, Whole Genome Sequencing, information for relatives of dying people, a Neonatal Unit Guide for parents, various cancer topics, and more.

# Showcasing volunteer impact

## Lived Experience Volunteers

**In 2025/26, we look forward to launching our 'Lived Experience Volunteer' offer.**

These volunteers will be a diverse range of people who all have lived experience of having a learning disability and/or neurodivergence. They will include those who have used such services before, as well as those who have not and who can therefore offer a fresh perspective. With support, they will determine the key themes they wish to consider during the visits, and will conduct 'walkarounds' of main public areas of health and care settings, before providing their feedback and views.

This volunteer role will support volunteers to develop their own skills, including teamwork and communication, while enabling their perspectives to be shared, and heard. Their input and any improvements made by services as a result, will benefit other service users and visitors, including those who are neurodivergent and/or have a learning disability.



### Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)



**0300 77 77 007**



[Enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Liverpool City Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Income from LCC (contract, ND/LD and BSL)	£429,838.77	Staffing costs	£395,561.11
Access To Work funding given to us to disperse	£5449.96	Operational costs	£40,915.04
Additional income from other sources	£19,999.58	Support and admin	£9265.2
Total income	£455,288.31	Total Expenditure	£445,741.35

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £6,451.95 received from Mersey Care – a delayed payment for Long Covid work done in 2022–23
- £1000 received from Healthwatch England for input into Trans Project
- £150 received from Healthwatch England for NHS Confederation focus group
- £200 received from Healthwatch England for involvement in E&E material review
- £1666 received from ICB for our share of the GP Access Project
- £1364.63 received for UKSPF via LCVS
- £4355 received for Cancer Collaborative – delayed payment for work done in 23–24 via LCVS
- £1982 received for Cancer Collaborative (24–25 work) via LCVS
- £2500 received from Champs for Smoke Free Cheshire and Merseyside work

## Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Cheshire and Merseyside also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level. This year 9 local Healthwatch organisations received £15,000\* to undertake a substantial survey of our population around Access To GP

\* The share of this allocated to Healthwatch Liverpool (£1666) is included within our additional income listed above.



# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

**Our top three priorities for the next year are:**

1. Care homes and care settings
2. Neurodivergent people and/or people with learning disabilities
3. Equity and Inclusion

"On behalf of the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of our nine Healthwatch organisations for your challenge, insight, and advocacy on behalf of our residents.

Your work has been instrumental in ensuring that the voices of people across our communities—particularly those who are seldom heard—are not only listened to but acted upon. Whether through your detailed reports, community engagement, or your presence at our Board and Committee meetings, you have consistently brought forward the lived experiences that will help to shape better, fairer, and more responsive services.

Over the past year, your contributions have helped us navigate complex challenges—from recovery planning and service redesign to addressing health inequalities and improving access. Your role as a critical friend has strengthened our accountability and sharpened our focus on what matters most to the people we serve.

As we move forward into a period of transformation resulting from the national changes to ICBs, the impending publication of the 10 Year Plan, the development of Neighbourhood focussed health partnerships and the financial challenges the local system faces, your continued partnership will be vital.

We look forward to deepening our collaboration as we work together to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Thank you for your dedication, your professionalism, and your commitment to the people of our region."

**Raj Jain, Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Chair**

# Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Liverpool is delivered by Liverpool Advocacy Rights Information Development and Equality CIC, a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee and registered in England & Wales (company no 8254903) at 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH2.**

**Healthwatch Liverpool uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.**

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making**

We have a Community Interest Company board with 7 directors who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. In 2024-25 they met 9 times and made decisions on matters such as our budget, staffing, policies and values.

They are assisted by a parallel Community Engagement Board with 17 member organisations in this year, representing local communities to ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2024-25 the Community Engagement Board met 10 times, influencing the direction of particular projects, sharing community insights and setting our priorities for 2025-26.

## **Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences**

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

This then drives our work and our priority setting. Our Community Engagement Board helps us to decide which of the many issues we hear about through these routes are selected as our top priorities.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website and link to it on social media and in our member newsletter.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had four providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

## Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to Health and Wellbeing Board, the Place Partnership board, Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee. Primary Care Group and Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Partnership Boards

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System. We work collaboratively with the other local Healthwatch to ensure representation and input into the ICB board, the Health Care Partnership, Quality and Performance committee, Primary Care Committee and System Quality Group. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Thwaites.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by speaking on patient experience on a wide range of subjects and contributing to a review and refocusing of the Board.

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Partnership and Integrated Care Board by Sarah Thwaites, Chief Officer, in conjunction with the lead officers of the other 8 Healthwatch in the catchment area. We are also collectively represented on the Primary Care Board, Quality and Performance Board, Dental Recovery Board, Transformation Board and the System Quality Group.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result	Number of recommendations
Walton Manor Care Home	To learn more about the care home, the residents, and to allow for those that wish to provide feedback, to be heard.	We wrote a report of our findings which was published online, and we shared our findings with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and with the public.	We made 1 recommendation.
Crompton Court Care Home			We did not make any recommendations.
Mersey Parks Care Home			We made 3 recommendations.
Beechwood Specialist Services Nursing Home			We made 3 recommendations.
Kavanagh Place Care Home			We made 2 recommendations.
Greenacres Care Home			We made 2 recommendations.
Simonsfield Care Home			We made 1 recommendation.
Jasmine House			We did not make any recommendations.
Rodney House Care Home			We made 3 recommendations.
16 Crompton Street Care Home			We made 4 recommendations
St Joseph's Care Home			We made 4 recommendations.
Estuary House			We made 4 recommendations.
Breckside Park Residential Home			We made 3 recommendations.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result	Number of recommendations
Cressington Court Care Home	To learn more about the care home, the residents, and to allow for those that wish to provide feedback, to be heard.	We wrote a report of our findings which was published online, and we shared our findings with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and with the public.	We made 3 recommendations.
Brooklands Care Home			We did not make any recommendations.
Wavertree Bungalow		Our reports for these care home, including recommendations, is ongoing and will be published to our website when complete.	
Wavertree Nursing Home			
Brushwood House			
Brook View Care Home			
Glenmarie Manor Care Home			
Park View Care Home			
Marmaduke Care Home			
Broughton House Residential Home			
Pelham Grove Care Home			

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Sperm banking leaflet	We reviewed Liverpool Women's Hospital's Hewitt Centre 'Sperm Banking for Young People' information leaflet, and our suggestions for amendments and improvement were adopted, meaning clearer information and signposting for young people navigating this topic.
NICU leaflet outcome	We reviewed Liverpool Women's Hospital's 'Welcome to NICU' booklet and shared a series of recommendations to make the booklet more inclusive, and these have now been addressed in an action plan by NICU to ensure that they are taken forward.
GP registration issue for short term care home respite	We learned of an issue with a client's loved ones in short term care home respite, being incorrectly permanently registered with a new GP practice by the care home, which was far from their own home. This then meant their existing long-term GP declined to take them back post-respite. We liaised with the ICB, who further liaised with their long-term GP, resulting in them being reregistered. Further, the ICB and the Local Authority will look to liaise on clear comms to care homes about temporary vs permanent GP registration for short term respite.
2023/24 Dental Hospital Listening Event achieved outcomes in 2024/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Signage review to take place by trust</li> <li>- A review of patient information leaflets, to include FAQs and what to do if patients have concerns in between appointments</li> <li>- Patient feedback heard by Healthwatch Liverpool is being fed into a trust review of telephone systems</li> <li>- Review by trust of the website information regarding the volunteer patient application process, to ensure this is included and clear</li> </ul>



Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Patients at a GP practice told us that they were not allowed to book appointments in person but had to phone instead. This disadvantaged some patients because of their access needs.	After we liaised with the practice and the ICB Primary Care team, it was clarified that in person booking ability is a contract requirement. The practice has now amended their appointment booking system to allow this, and have amended their website to reflect this.
Enter and View report recommendations for Greenacres Care Home	Following our recommendations, staff have been instructed to ensure all visitors are greeted at the door and are shown where signing in book is, as well as the reason and purpose for using it.
Walton Centre Listening Event March 2025	Patient experiences and views collected during our Listening Events were shared with The Walton Centre, who have confirmed that feedback specifically on desired improvements to signage and food has also been shared further with the Estates and Facilities Team for future improvements.
Women's Reproductive Health Conditions Parliamentary Report Contributions	In Summer 2023, we submitted written evidence to the parliamentary report on Women's Reproductive Health Conditions, authored by the Women and Equality Committee. In 2024, this report was published, including our evidence. We detailed barriers and difficulties women have told us they have experienced with gynaecological and reproductive health as well as the impact that this has had on their lives and wellbeing. The published report made recommendations including topics of education, access, waiting lists, commissioning, and more. The government formally responded to this report and its recommendations in March 2025.

# Acknowledgements

**Our work in 2024–25, and the impact we have made in Liverpool, would not have been possible without the input of many individuals and organisations. With particular thanks to:**

- Everyone who has shared their views on health and care services with us, through our projects, surveys, events, subgroups, and more
- Members of our Community Engagement Board, other community organisations, partners from NHS Trusts and care providers;
- Our staff, volunteers, and board members

## **In Memoriam – Claire Stevens, 1966 – 2025**

**In loving memory of our colleague and friend Claire Stevens, a treasured member of our engagement team, who sadly died in June 2025 following a short illness.**

**Claire joined Healthwatch Liverpool in 2019, and had been making a difference for the people of Liverpool long before this, at LCVS and the Liverpool Mental Health Consortium amongst others.**

**Claire's care, passion and commitment has been and will continue to be felt by all, and the impact of her work for the people of Liverpool will continue to make a difference. She will be greatly missed by everyone who had the privilege of knowing her.**





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